

Fur Trapper Survey 2004-05

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Abstract

An estimate of Wisconsin's furbearer harvest by licensed trappers is used to document the economic importance of trapping and to assist in the management of furbearer species. Sixty-two percent of respondents said they trapped during the 2004-05 season. Trappers used a total of 381,000 sets on 697,000 nights during the 2004-05 trapping season.

Methods

The Fur Trapper Survey was mailed to a sample of 6,000 people who purchased a resident trapping license, or a conservation patron license. The sample was selected from the 2003-04 resident trapping ($\approx 3,650$) and the conservation patron ($\approx 2,350$) license holders who indicated they were trappers. A second mailing was sent to non-respondents. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part I questioned trappers on their trapping season including; number and species of furbearers trapped, average number of sets used, number of days spent trapping, total trapping expenses, and number of furs sold in and out of Wisconsin (Fig. 1). Part I also included questions on the hunting of furbearers by trappers. Part II pertained only to beaver trappers and will not be discussed in this summary. Please refer to the Beaver Trapper Report in this publication for this information. Data from all returned questionnaires were entered into the DNR UNIX computer and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Results

All duplicate responses were removed from the survey pool. Responses were received from 1,782 of 6,000 trappers surveyed. The resulting response rate was 29.7%.

Sixty-two percent of the respondents actively trapped for furbearers during the 2004-05 season. Furtrapper license holders were two times as likely to trap as conservation patron license holders (81% vs. 37%). Conservation patron license holders were as active during the 2004-05 trapping season (37%) as during the 2002-03 season (38%). The same holds true for Furtrapper license holders with 81% actively trapping in both the 2004-05 and 2002-03 seasons.

The majority of respondents (34%) trapped in the Northern Region of the state (Table 1). During the 2004-05 season, trappers trapped an average of 34 days. This was the same as the 2003-04 season (34 days). The average trapper incurred \$290.70 of expenses on such things as traps, lures, gas, and a license. This is very similar to 2003-04 average of \$253.93. The mean number of days spent trapping ranged from 39 to 30 days among regions, while the mean trapping expense ranged from \$230.49 to \$351.05 among regions (Table 2). Statewide, 18% of trappers also hunted furbearers in 2004-05.

When the results of this survey are expanded to the larger population of licensed furbearer trappers, we can approximate that 11,624 licensed trappers actively trapped and 5,566 trappers also hunted furbearers during the 2004-05 season. Roughly 4% of licensed furbearer trappers pursued bobcat, while 59% pursued raccoons (Table 3). The estimated number of red fox, gray fox, coyote, and raccoon harvested by hunting were 1,040, 277, 14,773, and 45,638,

respectively (Table 4). A summary of 2004-05 furbearer harvests and sales can be found in Table 5.

Wisconsin requires hunters and trappers to register all kills for bobcat, fisher, and otter. The official harvest for these species are from registration data, (please see Bobcat, Fisher, and Otter Harvest Reports in this document). The survey asked trappers the number trapped for each of these species. Survey results are not corrected for response bias, prestige bias or animals caught and released. These are obvious, as the harvest estimates for these species from the trapper questionnaire are higher than the registered harvest totals.

Trappers were asked what percent of their conibear sets were water sets or dry land sets. Sixty-nine percent of trappers' conibear sets were water sets. Trappers were also asked, of their dry land sets, what percent were blind sets, and natural and artificial cubbie sets. Most trappers that used dry land conibear sets used artificial cubbie sets (56.8%). The next most popular dry land conibear set was a blind set (24.5%). This was followed by natural cubbies sets (13.7%).

Cable restraints became legal in Wisconsin in 2004 during the latter portion of the existing canine season (January 1 – February 15). Trappers were asked if they used cable restraints during the 2004 and 2005 trapping seasons. Eleven percent of Wisconsin trappers in 2004, and 13% in 2005, used cable restraints during the open season. The average number of sets was 12.6 in 2004 and 13.3 in 2005. Trappers were asked, "Overall, how did cable restraints work for you"; 24.6% said "Excellent", 28% "Good", 13.7% "Fair", and 33.7% said "Poor". Only 6.5% of the trappers that used cable restraints reported catching a dog, with the mean number of dogs caught being 1.4. Most trappers surveyed, 52.9%, said they plan on using cable restraints in future years.

Table 1. *DNR regions where furbearer trappers did most of their trapping, 2004-05.*

Region	# of Trappers	Percent of Trappers
Northern	3,917	33.7%
Northeast	1,476	12.7%
West Central	1,953	16.8%
Southeast	1,093	9.4%
South Central	2,104	18.1%
Unrecorded	1,081	9.3%
Totals	11,624	100%

Table 2. *Percent of furbearer trappers that hunted, average number of days spent trapping, and average trapping expenses by DNR region during the 2004-05 trapping season.*

Region	% of Trappers who hunted	Average number of days trapped	Average trapping expense
Northern	14.4%	32.4	\$230.49
Northeast	21.2%	29.8	\$276.20
West Central	21.5%	36.0	\$351.05
Southeast	27.9%	37.3	\$334.40
South Central	24.4%	39.1	\$317.84
Unrecorded	15.7%	30.7	\$330.07
Statewide	18.2%	34.3	\$290.70

Table 3. *Estimated number of active furbearer trappers pursuing each furbearer species, and percent of active trappers trapping for each species, 2004-05.*

Species	# of Trappers	% of Trappers
Bobcat	465	4.0%
Coyote	2,348	20.2%
Fisher	2,778	23.9%
Gray Fox	1,011	8.7%
Mink	3,592	30.9%
Muskrat	5,521	47.5%
Otter	2,755	23.7%
Opossum	721	6.2%
Raccoon	6,823	58.7%
Red Fox	2,336	20.1%
Skunk	581	5.0%
Weasel	767	6.6%

Table 4. *Harvest of furbearers by trappers who hunted, and total harvest (trapping harvest + hunting harvest) for each of the commonly hunted species during the 2004-05 fur harvest season.*

Species	Hunted Harvest	Total Harvest (Trapping Harvest + Hunting Harvest)
Coyote	14,773	23,148
Gray Fox	277	2,249
Red Fox	1,040	7,527
Raccoon	45,638	203,374
Total	61,728	236,298

Table 5. *The 2004-05 fur harvest summary based on responses from licensed furbearer trappers.*

Furbearer	# Caught in Traps	# Sets Used	Total Days Trapped	# Sold in Wisconsin	# Sold out of State
Bobcat	222	2,437	7,510	11	11
Coyote	8,375	24,155	64,997	5,031	1,909
Fisher	2,398	12,159	35,878	1,028	514
Gray Fox	1,972	10,189	23,797	1,023	696
Mink	25,758	51,179	83,298	13,312	8,375
Muskrat	309,682	119,858	121,472	210,445	63,236
Otter	2,505	10,923	48,969	1,284	594
Opossum	44,756	8,945	27,636	9,989	4,820
Raccoon	157,736	106,842	181,332	99,753	40,673
Red Fox	6,487	23,491	64,270	3,407	2,025
Skunk	9,156	4,578	20,400	1,635	570
Weasel	7,552	7,120	17,415	4,599	1,456
Total	576,599	381,876	696,974	351,517	124,879

Dear Wisconsin Furbearer Trapper:

You have been selected to help gather information on fur trapping. Completion of this survey is voluntary. You can make an important contribution to the future of Wisconsin's fur harvests and trapping activity by taking the time to complete the attached survey. If you did not trap furbearers, simply answer questions #1 and #6 and return the survey. If you did trap, please fill out Part I of the survey. If you trapped beaver, please also complete Part II of the survey.

The information requested from you and other trappers is essential in managing Wisconsin's valuable fur resource. Through your cooperation we can determine catch, trapping success, trapping pressure, and trapper characteristics on a statewide basis. These facts are necessary for a better understanding of how regulations affect your trapping and the welfare of furbearer populations. With your help, the future of regulated trapping as a public service will be assured as we face challenges locally and globally.

Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey. Reverse the flap on the survey, tape the edge and mail. Using your stamp will save funds for management even though no postage is required to return the survey. *Please reply even if you did not trap this season or were not successful.*

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John F. Olson
Furbearer Ecologist

PART I.

1. Did you trap for furbearers in Wisconsin during this season? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No		2. In what DNR REGION did you do MOST of your trapping? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Northern <input type="checkbox"/> (3) West Central <input type="checkbox"/> (5) South Central <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Northeast <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Southeast			
3. About how many days did you trap? _____ days trapped					
4. Please fill in all five blanks for each kind of furbearer you trapped in Wisconsin during the past season:					
	Number caught in traps	Average Number of Sets	Total Days Trapped	Number SOLD in Wisconsin	Number SOLD Out of State
Otter	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Muskrat	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mink	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Raccoon	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Red Fox	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Gray Fox	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Coyote	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Bobcat	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fisher	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Skunk*	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Opossum*	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Weasel	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
*If either skunks or opossums were caught incidentally, then put zeros for average number of sets and total days trapped.					
5. Estimate your total trapping expenses for the past season: (traps, lures, gas, license, etc.) \$ _____		6. Did you also HUNT furbearers with gun and/or dogs during the past season? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No If yes, please give the number of each kind taken: _____ Red Fox _____ Gray Fox _____ Coyote _____ Raccoon			
7. Of the coyotes and foxes that you killed, how many had mange? _____ Red Fox _____ Gray Fox _____ Coyote					
8. Of conibear traps used, what percent were used as: _____ % water sets _____ % dry land sets		9. Of dry land conibear sets made, what percent were blind sets, natural cubbies, and/or artificial cubbies? _____ % blind sets _____ % natural cubbies _____ % artificial cubbies			
10. Cable restraints have been legal since 2004 during the latter portion of the existing canine season (January 1- February 15). Did you use cable restraints in 2004? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No If yes, how many sets did you have? _____ Did you use cable restraints in 2005? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No If yes, how many sets did you have? _____		10a. Overall, how did cable restraints work for you? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Good <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Fair <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Poor 10b. It is important for trappers to document the release of dogs from cable restraints. Did you restrain and successfully release any dogs? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No If yes, how many? _____			
		11. Do you plan to use cable restraints in future years? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No			

Figure 1. The 2004-05 furtrapper questionnaire.